

animal abuse

The SPCA received 987 reports of alleged cruelty for the period July 1 2010 to June 30 2011. This represents an increase of almost 15 per cent from the year before.

Up to a third of the cases involved confined dogs, or dogs allegedly kept in poor conditions. Having no enforcement powers, we referred the more serious cases, or cases where owners failed to make an effort to improve the conditions as recommended by our Inspectors, to the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA).



Pictured above are just two of the animals from cases where our Inspectors counselled owners to improve the conditions. Many people keep pets without knowing or caring to learn about their needs. The inability to manage the pet and a general perception that that is the way to keep a pet are all often coupled with an ignorance of the animal's welfare.

Dogs are often confined in areas with little shelter and without easy access to water. Cages are often too small or leashes are too short, restricting movement greatly. There seems to be a general lack of effort amongst owners to learn about the proper care of their pets and how to manage them. Cats, rabbits, hamsters and guinea pigs are often kept in small cages or carriers with poor flooring and in a dirty environment. Neglect by their owners is evident, as in many cases they say that they do not have time to clean the enclosures and that they are seldom at home.

In two separate cases, rabbits were given up by their owners following our advice to improve the conditions. One owner said the neighbours had been complaining about the animal, which had been kept in the corridor. 'Rai' and 'Brownie' have since been placed for adoption at the SPCA.

Welfare issues also crop up when owners take short cuts to solve behavioural issues – for example tying a dog up to stop him from chewing on slippers, or muzzling a dog in an attempt to stop him barking.

SPCA reviews animal protection law

Indifference to such practices have to be addressed and we need to solve the root of the problem. Part of the problem, in our opinion, is inadequate legislation. The SPCA has thus embarked on a project to propose changes to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals section of the Animals and Birds Act. Among the changes we are proposing is the broadening of the 'duty of care' of a person responsible for an animal. Under this proposed law, a person has to ensure that their pet's needs are met and their welfare secured. The owner can be prosecuted even before the animal endures 'unnecessary pain or suffering'.

Once the draft is finalised, we will be seeking online feedback on our proposal, from various stakeholders, including the public. Thereafter, the proposal will be submitted to the Ministries of National Development and Law.

AVA outcome in Husky case

In our May newsletter, we publicised the case of the neglected Huskies that had been tied to a balcony over Chinese New Year. We attended to the dogs over a two-day period, supplying water and food, following a report received from a concerned member of the public that the owners had gone away. The case was referred to the AVA, but they found 'no cruelty issues'. The owners were fined for not having the dogs licensed. They were also advised not to leave the dogs in the common corridor, and on what constitutes animal cruelty.



Pigeon shot with arrow



In June, one of our animal rescue officers attended a case involving a pigeon shot with an arrow in Bishan. The home-made arrow was still stuck in its body. As there were no witnesses in this case, the SPCA produced and distributed notices in the area offering a \$1,000

reward. We also alerted the media. As a result, the case was featured in the press, on television primetime news and on the radio. To date, no one has come forward with any information about the perpetrator of this barbaric act of cruelty.

Goffin Cockatoo abused at Changi Beach

On 15 May, the SPCA received a report that four men were throwing stones at a flock of cockatoos, and had injured one of them. They reportedly attempted to take the bird with them but when the witness confronted them, they fled in a car and on a motorbike. Our Animal Rescue Officer (ARO) took the injured bird to the Jurong Bird Park for treatment. Following the veterinarian's examination, it was determined that the cockatoo had suffered a double fracture on its right wing, with two puncture wounds. Unfortunately, it died the following week. With the assistance of the complainant, the police traced the licence plate of the car. However, the owner insisted that he was not involved in the incident and that it was a case of 'mistaken identity'. We circulated a photograph (supplied by the witness) of one of the alleged perpetrators on our Facebook page, but his identity remains unknown. We also approached the police to circulate the photograph to the public through the media. It was later reported in the English and Chinese press.

Prosecution

The SPCA received a report from a pet owner on 24 May that all 29 fish in one of his tanks had died.

He had earlier left the house with his son to buy some food. When he returned about 15 minutes later, he found them all dead. We advised the owner to make a

police report and our Inspectors went immediately to the scene. When we arrived, the police were already there and had gathered the necessary evidence. In early June the man's domestic helper was charged in court and was fined \$7,000. As she was unable to pay the fine, she was jailed for one month and repatriated following the jail term.



Dogs left in cars

The SPCA is receiving more reports of dogs left in stationary vehicles – one was even left unattended for two hours in a car park. Our rescue staff remained at the scene whilst we liaised with the police to trace the owner, who eventually came to release the dog. Fortunately, the little dog was none the worse for his ordeal but this was most likely because it was night time. We advise all dog owners that under no circumstances should their pets be left unattended in cars as our hot and humid climate can easily lead to the onset of heatstroke.

We would also advise dog owners to walk their pets early in the morning or at night. Walking a dog in the heat of the day can lead to heatstroke. For more information, visit <http://www.sPCA.org.sg/dogs.html#12>

Yishun Rooster

On 27 July, the SPCA received a report that a rooster had been found at the void deck of a block in Yishun. Its legs were tied with raffia and it was stuck amongst some bicycles. Our Inspector attended the location and found that the rooster's legs were tied together in a way that prevented it from walking about. Members of the public in the area did not know where the rooster came from, so it was brought back to the SPCA. Our consultant vet examined the rooster and found it to be in good health. It was re-homed in a Hindu temple at Upper Bukit Timah, where it is free to roam.

Rescues

* Nobody knows how this poor cat ended up in a container of watery cement, but thankfully a concerned member of the public informed us in time. Our ARO managed to fish out the little one and a caregiver promptly took the cat to a veterinary clinic, where it made a quick recovery. A big THANK YOU to the caller and the caregiver for helping save this kitty's life.



* We don't know how the kitten got herself stuck on the 25th-floor ledge of a building in North Bridge Road, but thankfully someone called us before it was too late. Our ARO managed to get her to safety shortly after arrival on the scene. After having lived on the edge for a brief moment, Chloe was brought to safety by our rescue staff and adopted by Dominic following a veterinary check and 10-day quarantine stay.



* A report was received in August of a mynah bird being caught by a piece of string in a tree overlooking the KPE and Pasir Ris exits on the TPE. We engaged the assistance of the Expressway Monitoring and

Advisory System (EMAS), who sent for a cherry picker. Our ARO, wearing a safety harness, was lifted up to approximately two and a half storeys to the mynah bird. He cut the string from the distressed bird, which had been hanging upside down for around three hours. The bird was brought back to the SPCA where it was checked by our veterinarian and kept under observation for a couple of days. It then flew to freedom on the third day.

* On the eve of Hari Raya, the SPCA received a call that there was a kitten trapped in-between two tombstones at Lim Chu Kang Cemetery. On arrival at the scene, the kitten was observed to be wedged in-between some concrete slabs. Our ARO hurriedly worked out a strategy to rescue the distressed animal. His first priority was to make the animal as comfortable as possible before carefully extracting it from its position. Members of the public who were nearby noticed the dilemma and offered to help. With the use of various lubricants, the kitten was eased out and brought back to the SPCA for a veterinary check. Xeno was soon adopted (below).



abandonment of small domestic animals

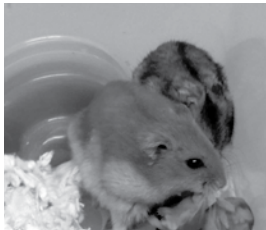
Hamster numbers increase

The SPCA took in 665 hamsters from July 2010 to June 2011. This marked a shocking increase of 46 per cent from the previous year. For the first time, the number of hamsters taken in exceeded that of rabbits, which dropped by 33 per cent to 421.

Abandonment of rabbits



In August, the SPCA received a report about an abandoned rabbit in the Tampines area. The animal died shortly after our Animal Rescue Officer arrived at the scene. In September, there were three reports of abandoned rabbits in one day. SPCA took in the animals (four in total) and have since put them up for adoption.



37 hamsters taken in

A member of the public handed over 37 hamsters at our reception counter in August – two of them were mothers with new born babies. They were allegedly found abandoned.

Hamster dumped in plastic bag

Another hamster was found abandoned in a plastic bag at Sengkang West Way near the flyover.

Guinea pigs found at void deck

Five guinea pigs were found at a void deck in Ang Mo Kio in early September. They were later put up for adoption.



Abandonment of a pet is a crime in Singapore. Those found guilty of such an offence can be jailed up to one year, fined up to \$10,000, or both. If you witness anyone abandoning their pets, call the SPCA at 62875355 ext. 9 immediately and email any photographs/video to inspector@spca.org.sg.

ANIMAL ABUSE

The following case tells of how one cat was abused, rescued and treated thanks to some kind ladies in the community. Dr Poon Yuet Foong tells us more...

Kitty was brought in by a group of kind-hearted aunties who saw that her tail was rotten. The aunties initially thought that Kitty had burns on the tail. Kitty was quite feisty when we examined her, probably due to the pain that she was in.

On examination, Kitty actually had a rubber band tied round the tail and a staple inserted at the end of her tail. We performed a tail amputation and sterilized Kitty at the same time. Kitty made an uneventful recovery in the clinic. After the surgery, Kitty was still wary of humans but after a few days of tender loving care, she became a normal fun-loving kitten again.

Kitty has since been rehomed and renamed Trixie.

In Singapore, cruelty to animals is a crime. Under the Animals and Birds Act, anyone who is found guilty of such an offence, including abandonment of any animal can be imprisoned for up to 12 months, fined up to \$10,000, or both.



animal welfare issues

SPCA submits appeal for cats to be permitted in HDB flats

The SPCA submitted an appeal in July to the Chairman of the Housing Development Board (HDB), James Koh Cher Siang, for a review on the prohibition of cats in HDB flats. This coincides with the establishment of an interagency task force by the Ministry of National Development to review pet ownership and stray management policies with regard to dogs and cats.

With the goal of fostering responsible pet ownership, we have advocated that cats be microchipped, sterilised and kept indoors. With an ever-increasing and ageing population in Singapore, cats can be a wonderful source of companionship for the elderly, especially when individuals are living alone, without the support of a family or loved ones. Keeping a pet cat may reduce their stress, and help them to remain mentally and physically healthy. Cats have also proven to be therapeutic for those suffering from chronic illnesses.

SPCA asks for a review of the sale of Red-eared Sliders as pets

In May, we officially raised our concerns with the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) about the suitability of Red-eared Sliders (terrapins) as pets. As SPCA inspectors have discovered, these creatures are often subjected to a lack of proper care and poor living conditions.

Red-eared Sliders are cheap and are small when young, and many owners buy them on impulse. Over the years, countless numbers of them have been released into the environment, usually into reservoirs and ponds. We have previously urged the AVA to control the number of Red-eared Sliders on sale, however the AVA's reply was that Singapore operates on a free market system and it would not be appropriate to restrict the numbers of terrapins sold.

Furthermore, pet shop owners are reminded to educate their customers about the proper care of pets, and never to abandon them. The AVA believes that public education is the key to reducing the problems of unwanted pets, abandonment and improving animal welfare standards in Singapore and it actively promotes and organises campaigns on responsible pet ownership. According to the AVA, there is no conclusive evidence that the Red-eared Slider poses a significant threat to the local ecosystem.

HRSS and SPCA submit appeal to AVA

The House Rabbit Society of Singapore (HRSS) and the SPCA jointly wrote to the AVA in July to ask that it impose regulations controlling the breeding and sale of small animals in Singapore. We cited a recent case of eight neglected pedigree rabbits, taken in by the HRSS, and both societies' concern about the online commercial trade in animals.

Again, the AVA has replied that pet shops and dog farms operate within Singapore's free market system, and it would not be appropriate for the AVA to restrict the number of pets sold. Furthermore, the AVA stated that it has licensing conditions in place to protect the welfare of any animals for sale. Pet shop grading and compulsory formalised training for the pet retail industry (conducted by Temasek Polytechnic) is also in place. The AVA regularly reviews the situation on the ground and will continue to introduce necessary measures to better safeguard animal welfare.

Animal welfare policy forum

The first forum on animal welfare policies was held on 18 June at Chong Pang Community Club. Organised by Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) in collaboration with the constituency's grassroots organisation, the discussion was chaired by Minister for Foreign Affairs & Minister for Law, Mr K Shanmugam and Louis Ng. Over 400 people attended the event. Participants raised issues such as stronger enforcement by the authorities in cases of animal abuse, and a review of the rule prohibiting cats in HDB flats.

AVA rules for 'potential dangerous dogs'

Following its announcement last November about changes to Dog Licensing and Control Rules in November 2010, the AVA has established a panel to accredit dog trainers for the purpose of training dogs that are listed under the Second Schedule, or any dogs that have been assessed by the AVA to be potentially dangerous. The Panel for the Accreditation of Dog Trainers (PADT) comprises experts from both the public and private sectors. Dog owners can now refer to AVA's website www.ava.gov.sg for a list of their accredited trainers.

SPCA supports ACRES dolphin campaign

On Sunday 28 August the SPCA showed its continued support for ACRES' World's Saddest Dolphins Campaign (www.sadstdolphins.com), by participating in an event organised by ACRES and Young NTUC at Speaker's Corner. The concert, which featured many local musicians, was organised to demonstrate a united stand against Resorts World Sentosa's plan to import 25 wild-caught dolphins for its Marine Life Park. The SPCA strongly objects to the importation of these cetaceans for the purpose of entertainment in a public attraction. Read our latest letter to the press on the issue, which went unpublished: <http://www.sPCA.org.sg/>



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